



# TRIPLER ARMY MEDICAL CENTER

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*For Immediate Release*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Civilian healthcare workers are first to get H1N1 vaccinations at Tripler**

TRIPLER ARMY MEDICAL CENTER –The first to receive the H1N1 influenza vaccine at Tripler Army Medical Center on Oct. 20 were civilian medical staff members who provide direct care to the military community.

Tripler is vaccinating these health care providers with the several hundred doses of the vaccine it received last week, as its share of the state of Hawaii's first shipment of the H1N1 vaccine supplies.

Most active duty military personnel in Hawaii will have to wait until at least late November, when the Department of Defense is expected to distribute its supplies of the H1N1 vaccine for the majority of its active duty military population.

"Military mission readiness drives DoD's priorities," said Col. Michael Sigmon, chief of preventive medicine for Tripler Army Medical Center and the Army's Pacific Regional Medical Command.

Sigmon said that DoD decided who gets vaccinated first, based on the potential health risks of H1N1 on military readiness. "DoD's first priority are those now deployed overseas, those about to deploy, and those who are joining the military and who must live together and train together intensely for extended periods of time," Sigmon said.

Sigmon said that large shipments of the vaccine to serve Hawaii's active duty population may arrive later in the year than was planned.

At this time, all military medical clinics are receiving their allocation of the H1N1 vaccines from the state, also intended for the military family and civilian personnel populations they serve. All clinics are also following the Hawaii Health Department and CDC priorities in administering the H1N1 vaccine.

CDC has adopted the recommendation of its Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), a panel made up of medical and public health experts that met in July to make recommendations on who should receive the 2009 H1N1 vaccine when it became available.

The five priority groups include those who are at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 influenza or related complications. They are likely to come in contact with influenza viruses as part of their occupation and could transmit influenza viruses to others in medical care settings, or they are close contacts of infants younger than 6 months (who are too young to be vaccinated). They are:

- pregnant women,
- people who live with or provide care for infants younger than 6 months (e.g., parents, siblings, and day care providers),

- health care and emergency medical services personnel,
- people 6 months through 24 years of age, and,
- people 25 years through 64 years of age who have certain medical conditions that put them at higher risk for influenza-related complications.

Once vaccine demand among younger age groups has been met, ACIP recommends that programs and providers offer vaccination to people 65 or older. On-going studies have shown that this age group seems to be less at risk for being infected with the H1N1 virus, possibly because they have been exposed to a form of the virus many years ago and have built up immunity to the current H1N1 virus strain. Sigmon stressed that while the over 65 population is at less risk from the H1N1 virus, that same population is at more risk for the seasonal influenza.

“We continue to provide vaccinations at the major Oahu exchanges throughout October. A schedule is located on the TAMC website by visiting [www.tamc.amedd.army.mil](http://www.tamc.amedd.army.mil) and clicking on “Fight the Flu”. Our over 65 patients are a priority for these vaccinations,” said Sigmon.

The best resistance to the H1N1 virus remains common sense personal hygiene, noted Sigmon.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it, or sneeze in your sleeve.
- Wash your hands often and thoroughly, with soap and water, especially after coughing and sneezing. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Clean regularly, knobs, telephones and items that many people use or touch. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay at home, to prevent others from getting sick. Stay away from other people for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone, after you have stopped using any fever-reducing medicine. Health care workers should remain on home isolation for seven days.